



# Lesbian & Gay Parenting

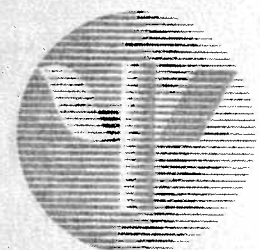


*Committee on Lesbian, Gay,  
and Bisexual Concerns*

*Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families*

*Committee on Women  
in Psychology*

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



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The APA Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns Office has worked since 1975 to eliminate the stigma of mental illness which has been mistakenly associated with same-sex sexual orientation and to reduce prejudice, discrimination, and violence against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Major functions of the office include support to APA's Committee on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns; liaison with the Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues (APA Division 44) and with other APA groups that have an interest in lesbian, gay, and bisexual concerns; policy analysis, development, and advocacy for APA policy; technical assistance, information, and referral to APA members, other professionals, policymakers, the media, and the public; and development and dissemination of publications and other information on lesbian, gay and bisexual concerns in psychology.

The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns Office is housed within the Public Interest Directorate, which works to advance psychology as a means of promoting human welfare. Other programs within the Public Interest Directorate work on issues related to AIDS; adolescent health; aging; children, youth and families; disability; ethnic minorities; urban issues; violence; women; and workplace health.



The pink triangle was used in Nazi concentration camps to identify men interned for homosexuality. Some historians believe that lesbians interned by the Nazis would have been identified by a black triangle as "asocial." Many lesbian, gay, and bisexual organizations have adopted the pink triangle as a symbol of the need for continued vigilance toward sexual orientation prejudice, discrimination, and violence.



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Printed in the United States of America



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## PREFACE

*Lesbian and Gay Parenting* is a joint publication of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Committee on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns (CLGBC); Committee on Children, Youth, and Families (CYF); and Committee on Women in Psychology (CWP). The previous edition, which was titled *Lesbian and Gay Parenting: A Resource for Psychologists* (1995) was the successor to a publication titled *Lesbian Parents and Their Children: A Resource Paper for Psychologists* that was jointly produced by CLGBC and CWP in 1991. The 1991 publication was narrowly focused on providing an orientation to the research literature for psychologists doing child custody evaluations or giving expert testimony in court cases involving lesbian mothers. In addition, the publication was also targeted for lawyers and parties in parental rights cases involving lesbian parents, as the information provided could assist them in being better informed about the potential role of psychological research or psychological witnesses in their cases. The relatively narrow focus of this publication was selected because the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns Office received a significant number of requests for resources on the relevant research literature from parents, lawyers, and psychologists involved in parental rights cases.

When CLGBC and CWP decided to revise and update the publication in 1993, they invited CYF to participate in the development of the new edition. The committees broadened the focus of the publication to include the empirical research on gay fathers, as well as lesbian mothers, and the clinical literature relevant to psychological services for lesbian and gay parents, their children, and their families.

When the current edition was first planned in 1999, the committees decided that the focus of the publication should be narrowed again to serve the needs of psychologists, lawyers, and parties in family law cases. The decision to narrow the focus was made because the need for the publication seemed to be primarily in the forensic context.

*Lesbian and Gay Parenting* is divided into three parts. Part I is a summary of research findings on lesbian mothers, gay fathers, and their children. Although comprehensive, the research summary is focused on

those issues that often arise in family law cases involving lesbian mothers or gay fathers. Part II is an annotated bibliography of the literature cited in Part I. Part III provides some additional resources relevant to lesbian and gay parenting in the forensic context: APA amicus briefs, professional association policies, and contact information for relevant organizations. We hope the publication will be useful to clinicians, researchers, students, lawyers, and parents involved in legal and policy issues related to lesbian and gay parenting.

Our grateful acknowledgements to Charlotte Patterson for contributing the summary of research findings; to Mary Ballou, Ed Dunne, Susan Iasenza, Steven James (CLGBC), Linda Jones, Bianca Cody Murphy (CWP), Gary Ross Reynolds (CLGBC), Lourdes Rodriques-Nogués (CLGBC), William Sanchez (CYF), and Ena Vazquez-Nuttal (CYF), for assistance in compiling the bibliography for the previous edition and writing the annotations; and to Natalie Eldridge, Patricia Falk, Mary Clare, Lawrence Kurdek, April Martin, Royce Scrivner, Andy Benjamin, Beverly Greene (CLGBC), and Laura Brown for reviewing the manuscript. We also thank Helen Supranova, Andrea Solarz, and Jessica Gehle for their work on the bibliography. We gratefully acknowledge the APA staff liaisons to our committees, Mary Campbell (CYF), Gwendolyn Keita (CWP), and Leslie Cameron (CWP); their assistants, Charlene DeLong and Gabriel Twose, and the APA publications staff members Joanne Zaslow, Editorial and Design Services, and Stevie Wilson. We especially thank Clinton Anderson, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns Officer, who worked diligently with committee members and staff to move this manuscript toward publication.

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# LESBIAN AND GAY PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

*Charlotte J. Patterson*

**L**ike families headed by heterosexual parents, lesbian and gay parents and their children are a diverse group (Arnup, 1995; Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Martin, 1998; Morris, Balsam, & Rothblum, 2002). Unlike heterosexual parents and their children, however, lesbian and gay parents and their children are often subject to prejudice because of their sexual orientation that can turn judges, legislators, professionals, and the public against them, sometimes resulting in negative outcomes, such as loss of physical custody, restrictions on visitation, and prohibitions against adoption (ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, 2002; Appell, 2003; Patterson, Fulcher, & Wainright, 2002). Negative attitudes about lesbian and gay parenting may be held in the population at large (King & Black, 1999; McLeod, Crawford, & Zechmeister, 1999) as well as by psychologists (Crawford, McLeod, Zamboni, & Jordan, 1999). As with beliefs about other socially stigmatized groups, the beliefs held generally in society about lesbians and gay men are often not based in personal experience, but are frequently culturally transmitted (Herek, 1995; Gillis, 1998). The purpose of this summary of research findings on lesbian and gay parents and their children is to evaluate widespread beliefs in the light of empirical data and in this way ameliorate negative effects of unwarranted prejudice.

Because many beliefs about lesbian and gay parents and their children are open to empirical testing, psychological research can evaluate their accuracy. Systematic research comparing lesbian and gay adults to heterosexual adults began in the late 1950s, and research comparing children of lesbian and gay parents with those of heterosexual parents is of a more recent vintage. Research on lesbian and gay adults began with Evelyn Hooker's landmark study (1957), resulted in the declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973 (Gonsiorek, 1991), and continues today (e.g., Cochran, 2001). Case

reports on children of lesbian and gay parents began to appear in the psychiatric literature in the early 1970s (e.g., Osman, 1972; Weeks, Derdeyn, & Langman, 1975) and have continued to appear (e.g., Agbayewa, 1984). Starting with the pioneering work of Martin and Lyon (1972), first-person and fictionalized descriptions of life in lesbian mother families (e.g., Alpert, 1988; Clausen, 1985; Howey & Samuels, 2000; Jullion, 1985; Mager, 1975; Perreault, 1975; Pollock & Vaughn, 1987; Rafkin, 1990; Wells, 1997) and gay father families (e.g., Galluccio, Galluccio, & Groff, 2002; Green, 1999; Morgen, 1995; Savage, 2000) have also become available. Systematic research on the children of lesbian and gay parents began to appear in major professional journals in the late 1970s and has grown into a considerable body of research only in recent years (Allen & Demo, 1995; Patterson, 1992, 2000).

As this summary will show, the results of existing research comparing lesbian and gay parents to heterosexual parents and children of lesbian and gay parents to children of heterosexual parents are quite clear: Common stereotypes are not supported by the data. Without denying the clarity of results to date, it is important also for psychologists and other professionals to be aware that research in this area has presented a variety of methodological challenges. As is true in any area of research, questions have been raised with regard to sampling issues, statistical power, and other technical matters (e.g., Belcastro, Gramlich, Nicholson, Price, & Wilson, 1993; Wardle, 1997). Some areas of research, such as gender development, and some periods of life, such as adolescence, have been described by reviewers as understudied and deserving of greater attention (Perrin and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). In what follows, efforts will be made to highlight the extent to which the research literature has responded to such criticisms.

One criticism of this body of research has been that the research lacks external validity because samples studied to date may not be representative of the larger population of lesbian and gay parents (Belcastro et al., 1993). Recent research on lesbian and gay adults has drawn on population-based samples (e.g., Cochran, 2001), and research on the offspring of lesbian and gay parents has begun to employ the same approach (e.g., Golombok, Perry, Burston, Murray, Mooney-Somers, Stevens, & Golding, 2003; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Criticisms about nonsystematic sampling have also been addressed by studying samples drawn from known populations, so that response rates can be calculated (e.g., Brewaeys, Ponjaert, van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998). Thus, contemporary research on children of lesbian and gay parents involves a wider array of sampling techniques than did earlier studies.

Research on children of lesbian and gay parents has also been criticized for using poorly matched or no control groups in designs that call for such controls. Particularly notable in this category was the tendency of early studies to compare development among children of a group of divorced lesbian mothers, many of whom were living with lesbian partners, to that among children of a group of divorced heterosexual mothers who were not currently living with heterosexual partners. The relevance of this criticism has been greatly reduced as research has expanded to explore life in a wider array of lesbian mother and gay father families (many of which have never lived through the divorce of a heterosexual couple), and as newer studies begin to include a wider array of control groups. Thus, contemporary research on children of

lesbian and gay parents involves a wider array of research designs (and hence, control groups) than did earlier studies.

Another criticism has been that, although there is considerable diversity within lesbian and gay parenting communities (Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Morris, Balsam, & Rothblum, 2002), research has often focused on narrowly defined samples. Early studies did generally focus on well-educated, middle class families, but more recent research has included participants from a wider array of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., Wainright et al., 2004). Recent studies have been conducted not only in the United States, but also in the United Kingdom, in Belgium, and in the Netherlands (e.g., Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2003, 2004; Brewaeys, Ponjaert, & Van Hall, 1997; Golombok et al., 1997, 2003; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003). Thus, contemporary research on children of lesbian and gay parents involves a greater diversity of families than did earlier studies.

Other criticisms have been that most studies have been based on relatively small samples, that there have been difficulties with assessment procedures employed in some studies, and that the classification of parents as lesbian, gay, or heterosexual has been problematic. Again, contemporary research has benefited from such criticisms. It is significant that, even taking into account all the questions and/or limitations that may characterize research in this area, none of the published research suggests conclusions different from that which will be summarized below.<sup>1</sup>

This summary consists of four sections. In the first, the results of research on lesbian and gay parents are summarized. In the second section, a summary of

<sup>1</sup> A study from Australia (Sarantakos, 1996) has been cited as demonstrating deficits among children raised by gay and lesbian parents in Australia compared to children raised by heterosexual couples. The anomalous results reported by this study--which contradict the accumulated body of research findings in this field--are attributable to idiosyncrasies in its sample and methodologies and are therefore not reliable. An expert reading of the Sarantakos article reveals that certain characteristics of its methodology and sample are highly likely to have skewed the results and rendered them an invalid indicator of the well-being of children raised by gay and lesbian parents in at least three respects: (1) the children raised by gay and lesbian parents experienced unusually high levels of extreme social ostracism and overt hostility from other children and parents, which probably accounted for the former's lower levels of interaction and social integration with peers (see pp. 25-26); (2) nearly all indicators of the children's functioning were based on subjective reports by teachers, who, as noted repeatedly by the author, may have been biased (see pp. 24, 26, & 30); and (3) most or all of the children being raised by gay and lesbian parents, but not the children being raised by heterosexual married parents, had experienced parental divorce, which is known to correlate with poor adjustment and academic performance. Indeed, although the differences Sarantakos observed among the children are anomalous in the context of research on parents' sexual orientation, they are highly consistent with findings from studies of the effects of parental divorce on children (see,



results from research comparing children of lesbian and gay parents with those of heterosexual parents is presented. The third section summarizes research on heterogeneity among lesbian and gay parents and their children. The fourth section provides a brief conclusion.

### **Lesbian and Gay Parents**

Three concerns have historically been associated with judicial decision making in custody litigation and public policies governing foster care and adoption: the belief that lesbians and gay men are mentally ill, that lesbians are less maternal than heterosexual women, and that lesbians' and gay men's relationships with sexual partners leave little time for ongoing parent-child interactions (ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, 2002; Falk, 1989, 1994; Patterson et al., 2002; Patterson & Redding, 1996). As material presented in this section will show, research has failed to confirm any of these beliefs (Allen & Burrell, 1996; Patterson, 1994b, 1994c, 1997, 2000; Perrin, 2002).

### ***Mental Health of Lesbians and Gay Men***

The psychiatric, psychological, and social work professions do not consider homosexual orientation to be a mental disorder. Many years ago, the American Psychiatric Association removed "homosexuality" from its list of mental disorders, stating that "homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities" (American Psychiatric Association, 1974). In 1975, the American Psychological Association took the same position and urged all mental health professionals to help dispel the stigma of mental illness that had long been associated with homosexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 1975). The National Association of

Social Workers has a similar policy (National Association of Social Workers, 1994).

The decision to remove homosexual orientation from the list of mental disorders reflects extensive research conducted over three decades showing that homosexual orientation is not a psychological maladjustment (Gonsiorek, 1991; Hart, Roback, Tittler, Weitz, Walston, & McKee, 1978; Reiss, 1980). There is no reliable evidence that homosexual orientation per se impairs psychological functioning, although the social and other circumstances in which lesbians and gay men live, including exposure to widespread prejudice and discrimination, often cause acute distress (Cochran, 2001; Freedman, 1971; Gonsiorek, 1991; Hart et al., 1978; Hooker, 1957; Meyer, 2003; Reiss, 1980).

### ***Lesbians and Gay Men as Parents***

Beliefs that lesbian and gay adults are not fit parents likewise have no empirical foundation (Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytteroy, 2002; Brewaeys & van Hall, 1997; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 2000; Patterson & Chan, 1996; Perrin, 2002; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Tasker, 1999; Victor & Fish, 1995). Lesbian and heterosexual women have not been found to differ markedly either in their overall mental health or in their approaches to child rearing (Bos et al., 2004; Kveskin & Cook, 1982; Lyons, 1983; Miller, Jacobsen, & Bigner, 1981; Mucklow & Phelan, 1979; Pagelow, 1980; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 2001; Rand, Graham, & Rawlings, 1982; Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000; Thompson, McCandless, & Strickland, 1971). Similarly, lesbians' romantic and sexual relationships with other women have not been found to detract from their ability to care for their children (Bos et al., 2004; Chan et al., 1998b; Pagelow, 1980). Lesbian couples who are parenting together have most often been found to divide household and family labor relatively evenly and to report satisfac-

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e.g., Amato, 2001, and Amato & Keith, 1991). *Children Australia* is a regional journal that is not widely known outside Australia. As such, it cannot be considered a source upon which one should rely for understanding the state of scientific knowledge in this field, particularly when the results contradict those that have been repeatedly replicated in studies published in better known scientific journals. In summary, the Sarantakos study does not undermine the consistent pattern of results reported in other empirical studies addressing this topic.

Some nonscientific organizations have attempted to convince courts that there is an actual scientific dispute in this area by citing research performed by Paul Cameron as supporting the existence of deficits in gay and lesbian parents or their children compared to heterosexual parents or their children. In fact, there is no scientific evidence of such deficits. Cameron's research is methodologically suspect. His key findings in this area have not been replicated and are contradicted by the reputable published research. Unlike research that makes a contribution to science, his key findings and conclusions have rarely been cited by subsequent scientific studies published in peer-reviewed journals as informing their scientific inquiry. For a detailed critique of the research project on which Cameron has based many of his published papers, see Herek (1998).

tion with their couple relationships (Bos et al., 2004; Brewaeys et al., 1997; Chan, et al., 1998a; Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Hand, 1991; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; Koepke, Hare, & Moran, 1992; Osterweil, 1991; Patterson, 1995a; Sullivan, 1996; Tasker & Golombok, 1998; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003). Research on gay fathers likewise suggests that they are likely to divide the work involved in child care relatively evenly and that they are happy with their couple relationships (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; McPherson, 1993).

The results of some studies suggest that lesbian mothers' and gay fathers' parenting skills may be superior to those of matched heterosexual couples. For instance, Flaks, Fischer, Masterpasqua, and Joseph (1995) reported that lesbian couples' parenting awareness skills were stronger than those of heterosexual couples. This was attributed to greater parenting awareness among lesbian nonbiological mothers than among heterosexual fathers. In one study, Brewaeys and her colleagues (1997) likewise reported more favorable patterns of parent-child interaction among lesbian as compared to heterosexual parents, but in another, they found greater similarities (Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003). A recent study of 256 lesbian and gay parent families found that, in contrast to patterns characterizing the majority of American parents, very few lesbian and gay parents reported any use of physical punishment (such as spanking) as a disciplinary technique; instead, they were likely to report use of positive techniques such as reasoning (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002). Certainly, research has found no reasons to believe lesbian mothers or gay fathers to be unfit parents (Armesto, 2002; Barret & Robinson, 1990; Bigner & Bozett, 1990; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989a, 1989b; Bos et al., 2003, 2004; Bozett, 1980, 1989; Patterson, 1997; Patterson & Chan, 1996; Sbordone, 1993; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Victor & Fish, 1995; Weston, 1991). On the contrary, results of research suggest that lesbian and gay parents are as likely as heterosexual parents to provide supportive home environments for children.

### **Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents**

In addition to judicial concerns about lesbian and

gay parents themselves, courts have voiced three major fears about the influence of lesbian and gay parents on children. The first of these fears is that development of sexual identity will be impaired among children of lesbian and gay parents. For instance, one such concern is that children brought up by lesbian mothers or gay fathers will show disturbances in gender identity and/or in gender role behavior (Falk, 1989, 1994; Hitchens & Kirkpatrick, 1985; Kleber, Howell, & Tibbits-Kleber, 1986; Patterson et al., 2002; Patterson & Redding, 1996). It has also been suggested that children brought up by lesbian mothers or by gay fathers will themselves become lesbian or gay (Patterson & Redding, 1996; Patterson et al., 2002).

A second category of concerns involves aspects of children's personal development other than sexual identity (Falk, 1989, 1994; Patterson & Redding, 1996; Patterson et al., 2002). For example, courts have expressed fears that children in the custody of gay or lesbian parents will be more vulnerable to mental breakdown, will exhibit more adjustment difficulties and behavior problems, and will be less psychologically healthy than other children.

A third category of specific fears expressed by the courts is that children of lesbian and gay parents may experience difficulty in social relationships (Falk, 1989, 1994; Patterson & Redding, 1996; Patterson et al., 2002). For example, judges have repeatedly expressed concern that children living with lesbian mothers or gay fathers may be stigmatized, teased, or otherwise victimized by peers. Another common fear is that children living with gay or lesbian parents may be more likely to be sexually abused by the parent or by the parent's friends or acquaintances. In the following I will address each of these areas of concern.

### ***Sexual Identity***

Three aspects of sexual identity are considered in the research: gender identity, which concerns a person's self-identification as male or female; gender-role behavior, which concerns the extent to which a person's activities, occupations, and the like are regarded by the culture as masculine, feminine, or

both; and sexual orientation, which refers to a person's choice of sexual partners, who may be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Stein, 1993). Research relevant to each of these three major areas of concern is summarized below.

**Gender Identity.** In studies of children ranging in age from 5 to 14, results of projective testing and related interview procedures have revealed that development of gender identity among children of lesbian mothers follows the expected pattern (Green, 1978; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Kirkpatrick, Smith & Roy, 1981). More direct assessment techniques to assess gender identity have been used by Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter (1983) with the same result: All children in this study reported that they were happy with their gender and that they had no wish to be a member of the opposite sex. There was no evidence in any of the studies of gender identity of any difficulties among children of lesbian mothers. No data have been reported in this area for children of gay fathers.

**Gender-Role Behavior.** A number of studies have reported that gender-role behavior among children of lesbian mothers fell within typical limits for conventional sex roles (Brewaeys et al., 1997; Golombok et al., 1983; Gottman, 1990; Green, 1978; Green et al., 1986; Hoeffler, 1981; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Kweskin & Cook, 1982; Patterson, 1994a). For instance, Kirkpatrick and her colleagues (1981) found no differences between children of lesbian versus heterosexual mothers in toy preferences, activities, interests, or occupational choices.

Rees (1979) administered the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) to 24 adolescents, half of whom had divorced lesbian and half of whom had divorced heterosexual mothers. The BSRI yields scores on masculinity and femininity as independent factors and an androgyny score based on the ratio of masculinity to femininity. Children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers did not differ on masculinity or on androgyny, but children of lesbian mothers reported greater psychological femininity than did those of heterosexual mothers. This result would seem to run counter to expectations based on

stereotypes of lesbians as lacking in femininity, both in their own demeanor and in their likely influences on children.

Gender-role behavior of children was also assessed by Green and his colleagues (1986). In interviews with the children, no differences between the 56 children of lesbian and 48 children of heterosexual mothers were found with respect to favorite television programs, favorite television characters, or favorite games or toys. There was some indication in interviews with children themselves that the offspring of lesbian mothers had less sex-typed preferences for activities at school and in their neighborhoods than did children of heterosexual mothers. Consistent with this result, lesbian mothers were also more likely than heterosexual mothers to report that their daughters often participated in rough-and-tumble play or occasionally played with "masculine" toys such as trucks or guns, but they reported no differences in these areas for sons. Lesbian mothers were no more and no less likely than heterosexual mothers to report that their children often played with "feminine" toys such as dolls. In both family types, however, children's sex-role behavior was seen as falling within the expected range.

More recently, Brewaeys and her colleagues (1997) assessed gender-role behavior among 30, 4- to 8-year-old children who had been conceived via donor insemination by lesbian couples, and compared it to that of 30 same-aged children who had been conceived via donor insemination by heterosexual couples, and to that of 30 same-aged children who had been naturally conceived by heterosexual couples. They used the Pre-School Activities Inventory (Golombok & Rust, 1993), a maternal report questionnaire designed to identify "masculine" and "feminine" behavior among boys and girls within unselected samples of schoolchildren. They found no significant differences between children of lesbian and children of heterosexual parents on preferences for gendered toys, games, and activities (Brewaeys et al., 1997).

In summary, the research suggests that children of lesbian mothers develop patterns of gender-role behavior that are much like those of other children.

No data are available regarding gender-role behavior for children of gay fathers.

**Sexual Orientation.** A number of investigators have also studied a third component of sexual identity, sexual orientation (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mickach, 1995; Bozett, 1980, 1987, 1989; Gottman, 1990; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Green, 1978; Huggins, 1989; Miller, 1979; Paul, 1986; Rees, 1979; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). In all studies, the great majority of offspring of both lesbian mothers and gay fathers described themselves as heterosexual. Taken together, the data do not suggest elevated rates of homosexuality among the offspring of lesbian or gay parents. For instance, Huggins (1989) interviewed 36 adolescents, half of whom had lesbian mothers and half of whom had heterosexual mothers. No children of lesbian mothers identified themselves as lesbian or gay, but one child of a heterosexual mother did; this difference was not statistically significant. In another study, Bailey and his colleagues (1995) studied adult sons of gay fathers and found more than 90% of the sons to be heterosexual.

Golombok and Tasker (1996, 1997) studied 25 young adults reared by divorced lesbian mothers and 21 young adults reared by divorced heterosexual mothers. They reported that offspring of lesbian mothers were no more likely than those of heterosexual mothers to describe themselves as feeling attracted to same-sex sexual partners. If they were attracted in this way, however, young adults with lesbian mothers were more likely to report that they would consider entering into a same-sex sexual relationship, and they were more likely to have actually participated in such a relationship. They were not, however, more likely to identify themselves as non-heterosexual (i.e., as lesbian, gay, or bisexual). These results were based on a small sample, and they must be interpreted with caution. At the same time, the study is the first to follow children of divorced lesbian mothers into adulthood, and it offers a detailed and careful examination of important issues.

#### *Other Aspects of Personal Development*

Studies of other aspects of personal development among children of lesbian and gay parents have

assessed a broad array of characteristics. Among these have been separation-individuation (Steckel, 1985, 1987), psychiatric evaluations (Golombok et al., 1983; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981), behavior problems (Brewaeys et al., 1997; Chan, Raboy et al., 1998; Flaks, et al., 1995; Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Golombok et al., 1983, 1997; Patterson, 1994a; Tasker & Golombok, 1995, 1997; Wainright et al., 2004), personality (Gottman, 1990; Tasker & Golombok, 1995, 1997), self-concept (Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997; Gottman, 1990; Huggins, 1989; Patterson, 1994a; Puryear, 1983; Wainright et al., 2004), locus of control (Puryear, 1983; Rees, 1979), moral judgment (Rees, 1979), school adjustment (Wainright et al., 2004), and intelligence (Green et al., 1986). Research suggests that concerns about difficulties in these areas among children of lesbian mothers are unwarranted (Patterson, 1997, 2000; Parks, 1998; Perrin, 1998, 2002; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Tasker, 1999). As was the case for sexual identity, studies of these aspects of personal development have revealed no major differences between children of lesbian versus heterosexual mothers. One statistically significant difference in self-concept emerged in Patterson's (1994a) study: Children of lesbian mothers reported greater symptoms of stress but also a greater overall sense of well-being than did children in a comparison group (Patterson, 1994a); but this result has yet to be replicated. Overall, the belief that children of lesbian and gay parents suffer deficits in personal development has no empirical foundation.

#### *Social Relationships*

Studies assessing potential differences between children of lesbian and gay parents, on the one hand, and children of heterosexual parents, on the other, have sometimes included assessments of children's social relationships. The most common focus of attention has been on peer relations, but some information about children's relationships with adults has also been collected. Research findings that address the likelihood of sexual abuse are also summarized in this section.

Research on peer relations among children of lesbian mothers has been reported by Golombok and

her colleagues (1983, 1997), by Green and his colleagues (1978, 1986), and by Patterson (1994a). Reports by both parents and children suggest typical patterns of development of peer relationships. For example, as would be expected, most school-aged children reported same-sex best friends and predominantly same-sex peer groups (Golombok et al., 1983; Green, 1978; Patterson, 1994a). The quality of children's peer relations was described, on average, in positive terms by researchers (Golombok et al., 1983) as well as by mothers and their children (Green et al., 1986; Golombok et al., 1997).

Although some children have described encounters with anti-gay remarks from peers (Gartrell et al., 2005), young adult offspring of divorced lesbian mothers did not recall being the targets of any more childhood teasing or victimization than did the offspring of divorced heterosexual mothers (Tasker & Golombok, 1995, 1997). The number and quality of adolescents' and young adults' romantic relationships has also been found to be unrelated to maternal sexual orientation (Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright et al., 2004). No data on the children of gay fathers have been reported in this area.

Studies of the relationships with adults among the children of lesbian and gay parents have also resulted in a generally positive picture (Brewaeys et al., 1997; Golombok et al., 1983; Harris & Turner, 1985/86; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Wainright et al., 2004). For example, adolescent relationships with their parents have been described as equally warm and caring, regardless of whether parents have same- or opposite-sex partners (Wainright et al., 2004). Golombok and her colleagues (1983) found that children of divorced lesbian mothers were more likely to have had recent contact with their fathers than were children of divorced heterosexual mothers. Another study, however, found no differences in this regard (Kirkpatrick et al., 1981). Harris and Turner (1985/86) studied the children of gay fathers, as well as those of lesbian mothers, and reported that parent-child relationships were described in positive terms. One significant difference was that heterosexual parents were more likely than lesbian and gay parents to say that their children's visits with the other parent presented problems for them

(Harris & Turner, 1985/86). Another significant difference was that young adult offspring of divorced lesbian mothers described themselves as communicating more openly with their mothers and with their mothers' current partners than did adult children of divorced heterosexual parents (Tasker & Golombok, 1997).

Research has also focused on children's contacts with members of the extended family, especially grandparents. Parents are often facilitators and gatekeepers of contact between generations in families. Because grandparents are generally seen as supportive of their grandchildren, any strains in parents' relationships with grandparents might have adverse effects on the frequency of children's contacts with grandparents, and hence also have a negative impact on grandchildren's development. Patterson and her colleagues have evaluated these possibilities in two separate studies (Fulcher, Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 2002; Patterson et al., 1998). Their findings revealed that most children of lesbian mothers were described as being in regular contact with grandparents (Patterson et al., 1998). In a recent study based on a systematic sampling frame in which lesbian and heterosexual parent families were well-matched on demographic characteristics, there were no differences in the frequency of contact with grandparents as a function of parental sexual orientation (Fulcher et al., 2002). Gartrell and her colleagues (2000) have also reported that grandparents were very likely to acknowledge the children of lesbian daughters as grandchildren. Thus, available evidence suggests that, contrary to popular concerns, intergenerational relationships in lesbian mother families are satisfactory.

Children's contacts with adult friends of their lesbian mothers have also been assessed (Fulcher et al., 2002; Golombok et al., 1983; Patterson et al., 1998). All of the children were described as having contact with adult friends of their mothers, and most lesbian mothers reported that their adult friends were a mixture of homosexual and heterosexual individuals. Children of lesbian mothers were no less likely than those of heterosexual mothers to be in contact with adult men who were friends of their mothers (Fulcher et al., 2002).

Concerns that children of lesbian or gay parents are more likely than children of heterosexual parents to be sexually abused have also been addressed. Results of work in this area reveal that the great majority of adults who perpetrate sexual abuse are male; sexual abuse of children by adult women is extremely rare (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Jones & McFarlane, 1980; Sarafino, 1979). Moreover, the overwhelming majority of child sexual abuse cases involve an adult male abusing a young female (Jenny, Roesler, & Poyer, 1994; Jones & McFarlane, 1980). Available evidence reveals that gay men are no more likely than heterosexual men to perpetrate child sexual abuse (Groth & Birnbaum, 1978; Jenny et al., 1994; Sarafino, 1979). There are few published reports relevant to the issue of sexual abuse of children living in custody of lesbian or gay parents. A recent study did, however, find that none of the lesbian mothers participating in a longitudinal study had abused their children (Gartrell et al., 2005). Fears that children in custody of lesbian or gay parents might be at heightened risk for sexual abuse are without basis in the research literature.

### *Summary*

Results of research to date suggest that children of lesbian and gay parents have positive relationships with peers and that their relationships with adults of both sexes are also satisfactory. The picture of lesbian mothers' children that emerges is one of general engagement in social life with peers, with fathers, with grandparents, and with mothers' adult friends—both male and female, both heterosexual and homosexual. Fears about children of lesbians and gay men being sexually abused by adults, ostracized by peers, or isolated in single-sex lesbian or gay communities have received no support from the results of existing research.

### **Diversity Among Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children**

Despite the tremendous diversity evident within lesbian and gay communities, research on differences among lesbian and gay families with children is sparse. One important kind of heterogeneity involves the circumstances of children's birth or

adoption. Some men and women have had children in the context of a heterosexual relationship that split up after one or both parents assumed lesbian or gay identities. Much of the existing research on lesbian mothers, gay fathers, and their children was initiated to address concerns that arose for such families in the context of child custody disputes, and was apparently designed at least in part to examine the veracity of common stereotypes that have been voiced in legal proceedings. A growing number of men and women have also had children after assuming lesbian or gay identities. Recently, research has begun to address issues relevant to families of this type (Brewaeys et al., 1997; Chan et al., 1998a, 1998b; Flaks et al., 1995; Gartrell et al., 1996, 1999, 2000; Golombok et al., 1997; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; McCandlish, 1987; Parks, 1998; Patterson, 1992, 1994a, 1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2001; Patterson et al., 1998; Steckel, 1987; Tasker, 1999). Parents and children in these two kinds of families are likely to have experiences that differ in many respects (Wright, 1998).

In this section, research findings are described on the impact of parental psychological and relationship status and on the influence of other stresses and supports. One area of diversity among lesbian and gay parented families concerns whether or not the custodial parent is involved in a couple relationship, and if so, what implications this relationship may have for children. Pagelow (1980), Kirkpatrick et al. (1981), and Golombok et al. (1983) all reported that divorced lesbian mothers were more likely than divorced heterosexual mothers to be living with a romantic partner. However, none of these investigators examined associations between this variable and children's adjustment or development. In studies that have compared adjustment of mothers and children in single- versus two-parent lesbian parent families (e.g., Brewaeys et al., 1997; Chan et al., 1998b), no clear differences have emerged.

Huggins (1989) reported that self-esteem among daughters of lesbian mothers whose lesbian partners lived with them was higher than that among daughters of lesbian mothers who did not live with a part-

ner. Because of the small sample size and the absence of statistical tests, this finding should be seen as suggestive rather than conclusive. Kirkpatrick has also stated her impression that "contrary to the fears expressed in court, children in households that included the mother's lesbian lover had a richer, more open and stable family life" than did those in single-parent lesbian mother households (Kirkpatrick, 1987, p. 204). On the other hand, self-concept did not vary as a function of family type in another study (Patterson, 1994a), though the failure to find differences in this case may have been due to lack of statistical power, as the number of single-parent families in this sample was small.

Issues related to division of family and household labor have also been studied. In families headed by lesbian couples, Patterson (1995a) found that biological and nonbiological mothers did not differ in their reported involvement in household and family decision-making tasks, but biological mothers reported spending more time in child care, and nonbiological mothers reported spending more time in paid employment. In families where mothers reported sharing child care duties relatively evenly, parents were more satisfied and children were better adjusted. Thus, equal sharing of child care duties was associated with more advantageous outcomes both for parents and for children in this study. In more recent studies, however, differences between biological and nonbiological mothers have not always been significant, and the associations between parental division of labor and child adjustment have not always been replicated (see, for example, Chan et al., 1998a; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002).

Another aspect of diversity among lesbian and gay parented families relates to the psychological status and well-being of the parent. Research on parent-child relations in heterosexual parent families has consistently revealed that children's adjustment is often related to indices of maternal mental health. Thus, one might expect factors that enhance mental health among lesbian mothers or gay fathers also to benefit their children. Lott-Whitehead and Tully (1993) reported considerable variability in the amounts of stress described by lesbian mothers, but

did not describe sources of stress nor their relations to child adjustment. Rand, Graham, and Rawlings (1982) found that lesbian mothers' sense of psychological well-being was associated with their degree of openness about their lesbian identity with employers, ex-husbands, and children. Mothers who felt more able to disclose their lesbian identity were more likely to express a positive sense of well-being. Unfortunately, no information about the relations of these findings to adjustment among children of these women was reported.

More recently, Patterson (2001) reported that maternal mental health was strongly associated with adjustment among young children born to, or adopted early in life, by lesbian mothers. In general, mothers who reported few psychological symptoms also described their children as better adjusted. The mothers in this sample reported being relatively open about their lesbian identities, and most were in good mental health. The sample was thus skewed toward the healthy end of the distribution. In light of the moderate sample size (66 mothers) and restricted range, it is especially noteworthy that associations between maternal mental health and children's adjustment emerged so clearly.

Like other children and youth, those with lesbian mothers who enjoy warm and caring family relationships are likely to fare better. Chan and his colleagues (1998b) reported that children had fewer behavior problems when parents were experiencing less stress, having fewer interparental conflicts, and feeling greater love for one another. This was true both for children of lesbian and for those of heterosexual parents in their sample. In a similar vein, Wainright and her colleagues (2004) reported that, when parents rated the quality of their relationships with adolescents higher, youth were less likely to report depressive symptoms, and were also less likely to have trouble at school; again, this was true both of adolescents with same-sex and of those with opposite-sex parents.

Another area of great diversity among families with a lesbian or gay parent concerns the degree to which a parent's lesbian or gay identity is accepted by other significant people in a child's life. Huggins (1989)

found a tendency for children whose fathers were rejecting of maternal lesbian identities to report lower self-esteem than those whose fathers were neutral or positive. Because of the small sample size and absence of significance tests, this finding should be regarded as suggestive rather than definitive. However, Huggins' (1989) finding does raise questions about the extent to which reactions of important adults in a child's environment can influence responses to discovery of a parent's lesbian or gay identity.

Gershon, Tschann, & Jemerin (1999) studied the relations among perception of stigma, self-esteem, and coping skills among adolescent offspring of lesbian mothers. They conducted interviews with 76 adolescents, aged 11–18 years, and examined the impact of societal factors on self-esteem. The participants had either been born to women who identified as lesbians ( $n = 25$ ) or had been born in the context of their mother's earlier heterosexual marriage ( $n = 51$ ). Gershon and her colleagues found that adolescents who perceived more stigmas related to having a lesbian mother had lower self-esteem in five of seven areas, including social acceptance, self-worth, behavioral conduct, physical appearance, and close friendship. They hypothesized that the presence of various types of coping skills would moderate this relationship between perceived stigma and self-esteem. However, their results showed that only good decision making had a moderating effect: In the face of high perceived stigma, adolescents possessing better decision-making skills had higher self-esteem in the area of behavioral conduct.

In a study of children born to lesbian mothers, Gartrell and her colleagues (2005) reported that 10-year-olds who encountered anti-gay sentiments among their peers were likely to report having felt angry, upset, or sad about these experiences. The children who reported such experiences were somewhat more likely to be described by their mothers as having behavior problems (Gartrell et al., 2005). This latter finding suggests the possibility that children of lesbian and gay parents may fare better in supportive environments. In view of the small effect size and

absence of data from sources outside the family, however, this result should probably be viewed as suggestive rather than definitive at this time.

Effects of the age at which children learn of parental homosexuality have also been a topic of study. Paul (1986) reported that offspring who were told of parental lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity either in childhood or in late adolescence found the news easier to cope with than those who first learned of it during early to middle adolescence. Huggins (1989) also reported that those who learned of maternal lesbianism in childhood had higher self-esteem than did those who were not informed of it until they were adolescents. Because young adolescents are often preoccupied with their own emerging sexuality, it is widely agreed that early adolescence is a particularly difficult time for youth to learn that a mother is lesbian or a father is gay (Bozett, 1980; Pennington, 1987; Schulenberg, 1985).

Some investigators have also raised questions about the potential role of peer support in helping children to cope with issues raised by having a lesbian or gay parent. Lewis (1980) was the first to suggest that children's silence on the topic of parental sexual orientation with peers and siblings might add to their feelings of isolation from other children. All of the 11 adolescents studied by O'Connell (1993) reported exercising selectivity about when they disclosed information about their mothers' lesbian identities. Paul (1986) found that 29% of his young adult respondents had never known anyone else with a lesbian, gay, or bisexual parent, suggesting that feelings of isolation are very real for some young people. Barrett and Tasker (2001) reported that most of the adolescents with gay fathers in their study were not open with heterosexual friends about their fathers' sexual orientation. On the other hand, Gartrell and her colleagues (2005) reported that most of the 10-year-olds with lesbian mothers whom they interviewed were open with peers about their families. It is possible that, over the last several years, and in some environments, it has become easier for children to feel comfortable disclosing that they have nonheterosexual parents. Lewis (1980) suggested that children would benefit from support



groups consisting of children of lesbian or gay parents, and young people interviewed by O'Connell (1993) agreed. Such groups exist, but systematic evaluations of them have not been reported.

In summary, research on diversity among families with lesbian and gay parents and on the potential effects of such diversity on children is still sparse (Martin, 1993, 1998; Patterson, 1995b, 2000, 2001, 2004; Perrin, 2002; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Tasker, 1999). Data on children of parents who identify as bisexual are still not available, and information about children of non-White lesbian or gay parents is hard to find (but see Wainright et al., 2004, for a racially diverse sample). Existing data on children of lesbian mothers, however, suggest that children fare better when mothers are in good psychological health and living happily with a lesbian partner with whom they share child care. Children may find it easier to deal with issues raised by having lesbian and/or gay parents if they learn of parental sexual orientation during childhood rather than during the early years of adolescence. Existing data also suggest the value of a supportive milieu, in which parental sexual orientation is accepted by other significant adults and in which children have contact with peers in similar circumstances. However, the existing data are still limited, and any conclusions must be seen as tentative. It is clear that existing research provides no basis for believing that children's best interests are served by family conflict or secrecy about a parent's lesbian or gay identity, or by requirements that a lesbian or gay parent maintain a household separate from that of a same-sex partner.

### Conclusion

In summary, there is no evidence to suggest that lesbian women or gay men are unfit to be parents or that psychosocial development among children of lesbian women or gay men is compromised relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents. Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents. Indeed, the evidence to date suggests that home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents are as

likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to support and enable children's psychosocial growth.

It should be acknowledged that research on lesbian and gay parents and their children, though no longer new, is still limited in extent. Although studies of gay fathers and their children have been conducted (Patterson, 2004), less is known about children of gay fathers than about children of lesbian mothers. Although studies of adolescent and young adult offspring of lesbian and gay parents are available (e.g., Gershon et al., 1999; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright et al., 2004), relatively few studies have focused on the offspring of lesbian or gay parents during adolescence or adulthood. Although more diverse samples have been included in recent studies (e.g., Golombok et al., 2003; Wainright et al., 2004), many sources of heterogeneity have yet to be systematically investigated. Although two longitudinal studies have been reported (Gartrell et al., 1996, 1999, 2000; Tasker & Golombok, 1997), longitudinal studies that follow lesbian and gay parent families over time are still needed. Thus, although a considerable amount of information is available, additional research would further our understanding of lesbian and gay parents and their children.

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## Acknowledgments

I wish particularly to thank Clinton Anderson for his invaluable assistance with the current version as well as with earlier versions of this manuscript. I also offer warm thanks to Natalie Eldridge, Patricia Falk, Mary Clare, Larry Kurdek, April Martin, Vera Paster, and Roy Scrivner for their helpful comments on the first version of this manuscript and to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful help in updating the current version.



## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

**T**he annotated bibliography includes all the publications cited in the research summary. The annotations are mostly published abstracts reprinted with permission of PsychINFO, ERIC, the publishers, or the authors. A few of the annotations are original and are reprinted with permission from the previous edition of this publication.

To increase the usefulness of the annotated bibliography, we have divided the entries into seven main sections:

- Empirical studies specifically related to lesbian and gay parents and their children,
- Empirical studies generally related to the fitness of lesbians and gay men as parents,
- Reviews of empirical studies specifically related to lesbian and gay parents and their children,
- Reviews of empirical studies generally related to the fitness of lesbians and gay men as parents,
- Legal reviews,
- Case studies and popular works, and
- Theoretical and conceptual issues.

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### **Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children**

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Bailey, J. M., Bobrow, D., Wolfe, M., & Mikach, S. (1995). *Sexual orientation of adult sons of gay fathers. Developmental Psychology, 31*, 124-129.

The sexual development of children of gay and lesbian parents is interesting for both scientific and social reasons. The present study is the largest to date to focus on the sexual orientation of adult sons of gay men. From advertisements in gay publications, 55 gay or bisexual men were recruited who reported on 82 sons at least 17 years of age. More than 90% of sons whose sexual orientations could be rated were heterosexual. Furthermore, gay and heterosexual sons did not differ on potentially relevant variables such as the length of time they had lived with their fathers. Results suggest that any environmental influence of gay fathers on their sons' sexual orientation is not large. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Barrett, H., & Tasker, F. (2001). *Growing up with a gay parent: Views of 101 gay fathers on their sons' and daughters' experiences. Educational and Child Psychology, 18*, 62-77.

Within the context of a review of the literature on gay male parents and their children, preliminary findings are reported from a postal survey of gay parents recruited through advertisements for volunteers. One hundred one gay and bisexual parents (aged 25-75 yrs.) located in the United Kingdom and Eire provided information about their routes to parenting, partners' involvement with parenting, successes in meeting common parenting challenges, and their eldest

sons' and daughters' responses to growing up with a gay parent. Results appear to confirm previous findings concerning the diversity of parenting circumstances of gay and bisexual men. Men with cohabiting male partners reported themselves as successfully meeting a variety of parenting challenges. While older children were more likely to know of their father's sexual identity, few gender differences were reported in response to this knowledge. Issues for further exploration are identified. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Bigner, J. J., & Jacobsen, R. B. (1989a).** The value of children to gay and heterosexual fathers. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), *Homosexuality and the family* (pp. 163-172). New York: Harrington Park Press.

Administered a value of children scale to 33 heterosexual fathers (aged 26-55 yrs.) and 33 matched homosexual fathers. Significant differences emerged only on the tradition-continuity-security and social status subscales. Homosexual subjects reported significant reasons motivating them to become parents. Their marriage and family orientation reflected a traditional attitude toward family life and served to protect against societal rejection. While some subjects truly desired children and valued the role children play in their lives, some homosexual subjects had children mainly to attain some type of social status. All subjects tended to value children negatively. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2004 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Bigner, J. J., & Jacobsen, R. B. (1989b).** Parenting behaviors of homosexual and heterosexual fathers. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), *Homosexuality and the family* (pp. 173-186). New York: Harrington Park Press.

Compared the responses of 33 homosexual (HMS) fathers with those of 33 heterosexual (HTS) fathers on the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory. HMS subjects did not differ significantly from HTS subjects in their reported degree of involvement or in intimacy

level with children. HMS subjects tended to be more strict and more responsive to children's needs and provided reasons for appropriate behavior to children more consistently than HTS subjects. Possible explanations for these similarities and differences in parenting styles are explored. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Bos, H. M. W., van Balen, F., & van den Boom, D. C. (2003).** Planned lesbian families: Their desire and motivation to have children. *Human Reproduction*, 10, 2216-2224.

Abstract can be found at [http://humrep.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/18/10/2216?max-toshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=1&author1=bos&title=planned+lesbian+families&andorexacttitle=and&andorexacttitleabs=and&andorexactfulltext=and&searchid=1122405216620\\_2712&stored\\_search=&FIRSTINDEX=0&sort-spec=relevance&journalcode=humrep](http://humrep.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/18/10/2216?max-toshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=1&author1=bos&title=planned+lesbian+families&andorexacttitle=and&andorexacttitleabs=and&andorexactfulltext=and&searchid=1122405216620_2712&stored_search=&FIRSTINDEX=0&sort-spec=relevance&journalcode=humrep) (Copyright © 2003 by the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embriology. All rights reserved.)

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**Bos, H. M. W., van Balen, F., & van den Boom, D. C. (2004).** Experience of parenthood, couple relationship, social support, and child-rearing goals in planned lesbian mother families. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45, 755-764.

The phenomenon of planned lesbian families is relatively new. The overall aim of this research was to examine whether planned lesbian mother families differ from heterosexual families on factors that are assumed to influence the parent-child relationship, such as experience of parenthood, child-rearing goals, couple relationship, and social support. One hundred lesbian two-mother families were compared with 100 heterosexual families having naturally conceived children. A variety of measures were used to collect the data, including questionnaires and a diary of activities kept by the parents. Lesbian parents are no less competent or more burdened than heterosexual parents. Both lesbian and heterosexual parents consider it



important to develop qualities of independence in their children. However, “conformity” as a childrearing goal is less important to lesbian mothers. Furthermore, lesbian social mothers feel more often than fathers in heterosexual families that they must justify the quality of their parenthood. There are few differences between lesbian couples and heterosexual couples, except that lesbian mothers appear less attuned to traditional child-rearing goals and lesbian social mothers appear more to defend their position as mother. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2004 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Bozett, F. W. (1980). Gay fathers: How and why they disclose their homosexuality to their children. *Family Relations*, 29, 173-179.**

Data collected by in-depth interviews reveal that many gay fathers disclose their homosexuality to their children. All but one subject reported that their children accepted them as homosexuals. Often the disclosure had the effect of deepening the father-child relationship. Gay fathers tend to be discreet regarding the overt expression of their homo-

sexuality in order to protect their children from other people's hostility. Some gay fathers do not disclose their homosexuality to their children. Nondisclosure may cause the father considerable stress, depending upon the intimacy of the father-child relationship and the centrality of the father identity to the man. (Reprinted with permission of National Council on Family Relations. Copyright © 1980. All rights reserved.)

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**Brewaeys, A., Ponjaert, I., Van Hall, E. V., & Golombok, S. (1997). Donor insemination: Child development and family functioning in lesbian mother families. *Human Reproduction*, 12, 1349-1359.**

Abstract can be found at:

[http://humrep.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/12/6/1349?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&author1=brewaeys&andorexact-fulltext=and&searchid=1124897164877\\_2266&stored\\_search=&FIRSTINDEX=0&sortspec=relevance&volume=12&resourcetype=1&journalcode=humrep](http://humrep.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/12/6/1349?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&author1=brewaeys&andorexact-fulltext=and&searchid=1124897164877_2266&stored_search=&FIRSTINDEX=0&sortspec=relevance&volume=12&resourcetype=1&journalcode=humrep). (Copyright © 1997 by European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology. All rights reserved.)

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**Chan, R. W., Brooks, R. C., Raboy, B., & Patterson, C. J. (1998). Division of labor among lesbian and heterosexual parents: Associations with children's adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology, 12*, 402-419.**

This study compared lesbian and heterosexual parents' division of household labor, satisfaction with division of labor, satisfaction with couple relationships, and associations of these variables with psychological adjustment of children. Participating lesbian (n = 30) and heterosexual (n = 16) couples all became parents by using anonymous donor insemination and had at least one child of elementary-school age. Although both lesbian and heterosexual couples reported relatively equal divisions of paid employment and of household and decision-making tasks, lesbian biological and nonbiological mothers shared child-care tasks more equally than did heterosexual parents. Among lesbian nonbiological mothers, those more satisfied with the division of family decisions in the home were also more satisfied with their relationships and had children who exhibited fewer externalizing behavior problems. The effect of division of labor on children's adjustment was mediated by parents' relationship satisfaction. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Chan, R. W., Raboy, B., & Patterson, C. J. (1998b). Psychosocial adjustment among children conceived via donor insemination by lesbian and heterosexual mothers. *Child Development, 69*, 443-457.**

Examined the relationships among family structure (e.g., number of parents, parental sexual orientation), family process (e.g., parents' relationship satisfaction, interparental conflict), and the psychological adjustment of children who had been conceived via donor insemination. The 80 participating families, all of whom had conceived children using the resources of a single sperm bank, included 55 families headed by lesbian and 25 families headed by het-

erosexual parents. Fifty families were headed by couples and 30 by single parents. Participating children averaged 7 years of age. Results show that children were developing in a normal fashion and that their adjustment was unrelated to structural variables, such as parental sexual orientation or the number of parents in the household. These results held true for teacher reports as well as for parent reports.

Variables associated with family interactions and processes were, however, significantly related to indices of children's adjustment. Parents who were experiencing higher levels of parenting stress, higher levels of interparental conflict, and lower levels of love for each other had children who exhibited more behavior problems. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Ciano-Boyce, C., & Shelley-Sireci, L. (2002). Who is Mommy tonight? Lesbian parenting issues. *Journal of Homosexuality, 43*, 1-13.**

Explored how 18 lesbian adoptive parents, 49 lesbian parents who formed their families biologically, and 44 heterosexual adoptive parents experience and perceive their parenting role, how they respond when their children seek them or their partner for particular nurturing, and how the parents negotiate the cultural expectation of a primary caregiver.

Lesbian couples were more equal in their division of child care than heterosexual parents, and lesbian adoptive parents were the most egalitarian. In all types of dual-parent families, parents were sought by their child for different activities. In heterosexual adoptive and lesbian biological families, the child's parental preference was rarely a source of conflict between partners. Lesbian adoptive parents were more likely to report that this preference caused occasional conflict. Reasons for this conflict are discussed in light of societal expectations of women and the role of mother. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2003 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Crawford, I., McLeod, A., Zamboni, B. D., & Jordan, M. B. (1999). Psychologists' attitudes toward gay and lesbian parenting. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 30*, 394-401.

How does the average practicing psychologist view a gay or lesbian couple wishing to adopt a child? Psychologists (N = 388) from across the United States read and rated one of six vignettes describing a couple interested in adopting a 5-year-old child. The vignettes were identical except that the couples' sexual orientation was depicted as gay male, lesbian, or heterosexual, and the child was either a girl or boy. Results indicated that participants who rated the gay male and lesbian couples with a female child were less likely to recommend custody for these couples than participants who rated the heterosexual couples. Before psychologists provide mental health services to gay and lesbian people and their children, they should complete formal, systematic training on sexual diversity. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Flaks, D., Ficher, I., Masterpasqua, F., & Joseph, G. (1995). Lesbians choosing motherhood: A comparative study of lesbian and heterosexual parents and their children. *Developmental Psychology, 31*, 104-114.

Compared 15 lesbian couples and the 3- to 9-year-old children born to them through donor insemination with 15 matched, heterosexual-parent families. A variety of assessment measures were used to evaluate the children's cognitive functioning and behavioral adjustment as well as the parents' relationship quality and parenting skills. Results revealed no significant differences between the two groups of children, who also compared favorably with the standardization samples for the instruments used. In addition, no significant differences were found between dyadic adjustment of lesbian and heterosexual couples. Only in the area of parenting did the two groups of couples differ: Lesbian couples exhibited more parenting awareness skills than did heterosexual couples. The implications of these findings are discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Fulcher, M., Chan, R. W., Raboy, B., & Patterson, C. J. (2002). Contact with grandparents among children conceived via donor insemination by lesbian and heterosexual mothers. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 2*, 61-76.

This study compared the networks of extended family and friendship relationships of children conceived via donor insemination with lesbian versus heterosexual parents. Eighty families participated; 55 of the families were headed by lesbian parents and 25 were headed by heterosexual parents. Parents reported their children's contact with grandparents and other important adults. Most children had regular contact with grandparents, other relatives, and adult nonrelatives outside their immediate households, and there were no differences in this regard as a function of parental sexual orientation. Both children of lesbian and heterosexual parents had more frequent contact with the parents of their biological mother than with the parents of their father or other mother. Contrary to negative stereotypes, children of lesbian mothers were described as having regular contact with grandparents. Regardless of parental sexual orientation, children were described as being in more frequent contact with grandparents to whom they were biologically linked. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Gartrell, N., Banks, A., Reed, N., Hamiliton, J., Rodas, C., & Deck, A. (2000). The National Lesbian Family Study: 3. Interviews with mothers of five-year-olds. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 70*(4), 542-548.

This third report from a longitudinal study of lesbian families presents data obtained from interviews with mothers (aged 29-47 yrs.) of 5-year-old children conceived by donor insemination. Results indicate that 87% of the children related well to peers, 18% had experienced homophobia from peers or teachers, and 63% had grandparents who frankly acknowledged their grandchild's lesbian family. Of the original couples, 31% had divorced. Of the remainder, 68% felt that their child was equally

bonded to both mothers. Concerns of lesbian families are discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Gartrell, N., Banks, A., Hamilton, J., Reed, N., Bishop, H., & Rodas, C. (1999). The National Lesbian Family Study: 2. Interviews with mothers of toddlers. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 69(3), 362-369.**

As part of a longitudinal study of lesbian families in which the children were conceived by donor insemination, interviews were conducted with 156 mothers and co-mothers (aged 26-51 yrs.). Topics covered in the interviews included health concerns, parenting, family structure, relationships, time management, and discrimination. Results yielded the following data: Most couples shared parenting equally, the majority felt closer to their family of origin, adoptive co-mothers felt greater legitimacy as parents, biology and nurture received the same ratings for mother-child bonding, and political and legal action had increased among many participants. The impact of these findings and that of homophobia on lesbian family life are discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Gartrell, N., Deck, A., Rodas, C., Peyser, H., & Banks, A. (2005). The National Lesbian Family Study: 4. Interviews with the 10-year-old children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 75(4) 518-524.**

This fourth report from a longitudinal study of U.S. lesbian families presents data from 78 families in which the children were conceived by donor insemination. Results indicate that the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse in these children was lower than national norms. In social and psychological development, the children were comparable to children raised in heterosexual families. Children of unknown donors were indistinguishable from those with known donors in psychological adjustment. Fifty-seven percent of the children were completely out to

their peers, and 43% had experienced homophobia. The children demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of diversity and tolerance. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2005 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Gartrell, N., Hamilton, J., Banks, A., Mosbacher, D., Reed, N., Sparks, C. H., & Bishop, H. (1996). The National Lesbian Family Study: 1. Interviews with prospective mothers. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 66(2), 272-281.**

Provides the initial interview data from a longitudinal, 25-year study on demographic characteristics, parental relationships, social supports, pregnancy motivations and preferences, stigmatization concerns, and coping strategies of 84 lesbian families (aged 23-49 yrs.) in which the children were conceived by donor insemination. Results show subjects were predominately White, college educated, middle or upper-middle class, and Jewish or Christian. Subjects are strongly lesbian-identified, have close relationships with friends and extended families, have established flexible work schedules for child rearing, are well educated about the potential difficulties of raising a child in a lesbian household, and have access to appropriate support groups. Results also show that the prospective children are highly desired and thoughtfully conceived. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Gershon, T. D., Tschann, J. M., & Jemerin, J. M. (1999). Stigmatization, self-esteem, and coping among the adolescent children of lesbian mothers. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 24, 437-445.**

This study examined the relationship between perceived stigma and self-esteem (SE) and the potentially moderating role of general coping skills and level of disclosure about the adolescents' mothers' sexual orientation in a sample of 76 adolescents (aged 11-18 yrs.) with lesbian mothers. Results showed that subjects who perceived more stigma had lower SE in five of seven SE areas (social acceptance, self-worth, behavioral conduct, physical

appearance, and close friendships), compared to those who perceived less stigma. In addition, coping skills moderated the effect of stigma on SE in three SE areas (self-worth, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct). However, only one subtype of coping skills (decision-making coping) was found to moderate the relationship of perceived stigma and SE in such a way that adolescents using more decision-making coping had higher SE in the face of high-perceived stigma. For social support coping, in the face of high-perceived stigma, subjects with more effective coping skills had lower SE. In the face of high-perceived stigma, subjects who disclosed more about their mother's sexual orientation had higher SE in the subscale of close friendships than those who disclosed less. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Golombok, S., & Tasker, F. (1996). Do parents influence the sexual orientation of their children? Findings from a longitudinal study of lesbian families. *Developmental Psychology*, 32, 3-11.**

Findings are presented of a longitudinal study of the sexual orientation of adults who had been raised as children in lesbian families. Twenty-five children of lesbian mothers and a control group of 21 children of heterosexual single mothers were first seen at age 9.5 years on average, and again at age 23.5 years on average. Standardized interviews were used to obtain data on sexual orientation from the young adults in the follow-up study and on family characteristics and children's gender role behavior from the mothers and their children in the initial study. Although those from lesbian families were more likely to explore same-sex relationships, particularly if their childhood family environment was characterized by an openness and acceptance of lesbian and gay relationships, the large majority of children who grew up in lesbian families identified as heterosexual. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Golombok, S., Perry, B., Burston, A., Murray, C., Mooney-Somers, J., Stevens, M., & Golding, J. (2003). Children with lesbian parents: A community study. *Developmental Psychology*, 39, 20-33.**

Existing research on children with lesbian parents is limited by reliance on volunteer or convenience samples. The present study examined the quality of parent-child relationships and the socioemotional and gender development of a community sample of 7-year-old children with lesbian parents. Families were recruited through the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children, a geographic population study of 14,000 mothers and their children. Thirty-nine lesbian-mother families, 74 two-parent heterosexual families, and 60 families headed by single heterosexual mothers were compared on standardized interview and questionnaire measures administered to mothers, co-mothers/fathers, children, and teachers. Findings are in line with those of earlier investigations showing positive mother-child relationships and well-adjusted children. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Golombok, S., & Rust, J. (1993). The Pre-School Activities Inventory: A standardized assessment of gender role in children. *Psychological Assessment*, 5(2), 131-136.**

The Pre-School Activities Inventory (PSAI) is a new psychometric scale for the assessment of gender role behavior in young children. Its design and test specification are reported, and the piloting and item analysis are described. Evidence of reliability is given, and several validation studies are reported, as are data on age standardization and norming. Some applications of the PSAI are considered. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Golombok, S., Spencer, A., & Rutter, M. (1983).** Children in lesbian and single-parent households: Psychosexual and psychiatric appraisal. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 24, 551-572.

Compared the psychosexual development, emotions, behavior, and relationships of 37 children (aged 5-17 yrs.) reared in 27 lesbian households with 38 children (aged 5-27 yrs.) reared in 27 heterosexual single-parent households. Systematic standardized interviews with the mothers and with the children, together with parent and teacher questionnaires, were used to make the psychosexual and psychiatric assessments. The two groups did not differ in terms of their gender identity, sex-role behavior, or sexual orientation. Also, they did not differ on most measures of emotions, behavior, and relationships, although there was some indication of more frequent psychiatric problems in the single-parent group. It is concluded that rearing in a lesbian household per se does not lead to atypical psychosexual development or constitute a psychiatric risk factor. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Golombok, S., Tasker, F. L., & Murray, C. (1997).** Children raised in fatherless families from infancy: Family relationships and the socioemotional development of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 38, 783-791.

Investigated family functioning and the psychological development of children (aged 3-9 yrs.) raised in fatherless families since their first year of life. Thirty lesbian mother families and 42 families headed by a single heterosexual mother were compared with 41 two-parent heterosexual families using standardized interview and questionnaire measures of the quality of parenting and the socioemotional development of the child. Results show that children raised in fatherless families from infancy experienced greater warmth and interaction with their mother and were more securely attached to her, although they perceived themselves to be less cognitively and physical-

ly competent than their peers from father-present families. No differences were identified between families headed by lesbian and single heterosexual mothers, except for greater mother-child interaction in lesbian mother families. It seems that children raised in fatherless families from birth or early infancy are not disadvantaged in terms of either the quality of their relationship with their mother or their emotional well-being. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Green, R. (1978).** Sexual identity of 37 children raised by homosexual or transsexual parents. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 135, 692-697. No abstract available.

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**Green, R., Mandel, J. B., Hotvedt, M. E., Gray, J., & Smith, L. (1986).** Lesbian mothers and their children: A comparison with solo parent heterosexual mothers and their children. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 7, 175-181.

Compared the sexual identity and social relationships of 30 daughters and 26 sons (aged 3-11 yrs.) of 50 homosexual mothers with 28 daughters and 20 sons of 40 heterosexual mothers. Mothers were currently unmarried White women aged 25-46 years. In addition to age and race, mothers were matched on length of separation from father; educational level and income; and number, age, and sex of children. Subjects were from rural and urban areas in 10 U.S. states and lived without adult males in the household for a minimum of 2 years. Data from children's tests on intelligence, core-morphologic sexual identity, gender-role preferences, family and peer group relationships, and adjustment to the single-parent family indicate that there were no significant differences between the two types of households for boys and few significant differences for girls. Data also reveal more similarities than differences in parenting experiences, marital history, and present living situations of the two groups of mothers. It is suggested that the mother's sexual orientation per se should not enter



into considerations on parental fitness that are commonly asserted in child custody cases. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Hand, S. I. (1991).** *The lesbian parenting couple.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Professional School of Psychology, San Francisco. No Abstract available.

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**Harris, M. B., & Turner, P. H. (1985/86).** Gay and lesbian parents. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 12, 101-113.

Conducted an anonymous survey of 23 male and female homosexual parents (aged 29-53 yrs.) and 16 heterosexual single parents (aged 19-47 yrs.) to see whether the parents' homosexuality created special problems or benefits or both, for their children. Both sets of parents reported relatively few serious problems and generally positive relationships with their children, with only a minority encouraging sex-typed toys, activities, and playmates. Heterosexual parents made a greater effort to provide an opposite-sex role model for their children. Homosexual parents saw a number of benefits and relatively few problems for their children, with females perceiving greater benefits than males. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Hoeffer, B. (1981).** Children's acquisition of sex-role behavior in lesbian-mother families. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 5, 536-544. No abstract available.



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**Huggins, S. L. (1989).** A comparative study of self-esteem of adolescent children of divorced lesbian mothers and divorced heterosexual mothers. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), *Homosexuality and the family* (pp. 123-135). New York: Harrington Park Press.

Administered the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory to nine sons and nine daughters (aged 13-19 yrs.) of divorced lesbian mothers (DLMs) and 18 age- and sex-matched sons and daughters of divorced heterosexual mothers (DHMs). Self-esteem (SE) scores of subjects with DLMs and DHMs were not significantly different. Daughters of DHMs had the highest and sons of DHMs had the lowest SE scores. Daughters who felt negatively about their mothers' lesbianism were more likely to have lower SE. Father's attitude toward the mother's lesbianism was also related to subjects' SE. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2004 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Johnson, S. M., & O'Connor, E. (2002).** *The gay baby boom: The psychology of gay parenthood.* New York: New York University Press. No abstract available.

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**King, B. R., & Black, K. N. (1999).** College students' perceptual stigmatization of the children of lesbian mothers. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 69, 220-227.

To ascertain the extent to which children of lesbian mothers are stigmatized, 338 undergraduate students were asked to complete a child behavior checklist for a hypothetical child of either a divorced lesbian or a divorced heterosexual mother.

Respondents attributed more problematic behavior in a variety of domains to the child of the lesbian mother, although this stigmatization was not compounded if lesbian mothers were depicted as living with adult female partners. Implications for child custody determinations and future research are considered. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Kirkpatrick, M., Smith, C., & Roy, R. (1981).** Lesbian mothers and their children: A comparative survey. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 51, 545-551.

Forty 5- to 12-year-olds, divided equally into groups according to their mothers' sexual choice and within group by sex, were assessed with a developmental history, WISC scores, the Holtzman Inkblot Technique, and the Human Figure Drawing test. Subjects' gender development was not identifiably different in the two groups. Prevalence of disturbance was not found to be a function of the mother's sexual choice. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Koepke, L., Hare, J., & Moran, P. B. (1992).** Relationship quality in a sample of lesbian couples with children and child-free lesbian couples. *Family Relations*, 41, 224-229.

Examined the quality of lesbian relationships by three factors: presence of children, extent of disclo-

sure concerning the nature of the relationship, and longevity of the relationship. Forty-seven lesbian couples (aged 21-66 yrs.) completed ENRICH, which measures the nurturing and enriching dimensions of an intimate relationship, and a 17-item researcher-designed questionnaire that included questions examining disclosure of the nature of the couples' relationship, relationship longevity, presence of children, education, annual income, occupation, and age. Overall, findings indicate that solid and happy relationships existed for the total sample of couples. However, couples with children soared significantly higher on relationship satisfaction and sexual relationship. No differences were found by longevity of the relationship or disclosure.

Implications for family life educators and family practitioners are discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Kweskin, S. L., & Cook, A. S. (1982).** Heterosexual and homosexual mothers' self-described sex-role behavior and ideal sex-role behavior in children. *Sex Roles*, 8, 967-975.

Compared self-descriptive scores and ratings assigned to an "ideal" child on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) by 22 heterosexual and 22 homosexual mothers (aged 19-43 yrs.). No significant differences were found. However, significance was obtained when subjects were classified in terms of self-described sex-role behavior on the BSRI.

Subjects tended to rate an "ideal" child in the same manner in which they rated themselves. Results show subjects' self-described sex-role behavior to be a better indicator of desired sex-role behavior in children than subjects' sexual orientation.

Similarities in sex-role behavior and attitudes of heterosexual and homosexual mothers far outweighed the present subjects' differences when determined by self-description and attitudes toward ideal child behavior. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Lewis, K. G. (1980). Children of lesbians: Their point of view. *Social Work*, 25, 198-203.**

Interviews with 21 children of lesbians in greater Boston area, ranging in age from 9 to 26, identified several major issues. Problems experienced involved parents' divorce and disclosure of mother's homosexuality. Problems between mother and children were secondary to the issue of children's respect for difficult step she had taken. (Reprinted with permission of ERIC Copyright © 1980. All rights reserved.)

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**Lott-Whitehead, L., & Tully, C. T. (1993). The family lives of lesbian mothers. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 63, 265-280.**

Studied the family lives of 45 adult lesbians who were also parents. Subjects responded to a questionnaire consisting of closed- and open-ended items that elicited responses on a broad range of topics related to family life. Findings revealed that the subjects were aware of the impact of their sexual orientation on their children, that they were vigilant about maintaining the integrity of their families, and that the stress they felt was buffered by social support networks. Some subjects noted that a sector of the lesbian community itself was unsupportive of lesbian motherhood. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Lyons, T. A. (1983). Lesbian mothers' custody fears. *Women and Therapy*, 2, 231-240.**

Conducted a comparative study between 1977 and 1981 of both lesbian and heterosexual mothers, focusing on the different kinds of support systems that they employ to meet both emotional and material needs for themselves and their children. Forty-three lesbian and 37 heterosexual formerly married mothers were studied. One half of lesbian subjects and one third of heterosexual subjects lived with partners. Results show no differences between the groups in social support systems and relationships

with ex-husbands. Motherhood was a primary part of self-identity for all subjects. Fear of loss of custody was a persistent theme for lesbian mothers and was the only major difference between the groups. Court-awarded custody is never final and can be challenged from a number of sources. Lesbians often lose custody when their situation is discovered. Custody can be used by ex-spouses to adjust property settlements. Fear of disclosure can have disruptive effects on comfort and ease of family gatherings. It is concluded that motherhood, rather than the pursuit of multiple lovers, was the central organizing theme in the lives of lesbian subjects. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**McLeod, A. C., Crawford, I., & Zechmeister, J. (1999). Heterosexual undergraduates' attitudes toward gay fathers and their children. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 11, 43-62.**

One hundred fifty-one heterosexual college students' attitudes toward gay male couples and their adopted children were assessed. Subjects evaluated vignettes depicting either a gay male couple or heterosexual couple and their adopted son along the dimensions of parenting ability, degree to which the child's problems were attributable to the parental relationship, distress of the child (including gender and sexual identity confusion), and the extent to which custody reassignment was perceived to be beneficial. Differences in subjects' ratings indicated that a boy raised by gay fathers was perceived to be experiencing greater confusion regarding his sexual orientation and gender identity. Custody reassignment was also rated as more beneficial for the son raised by gay fathers. Multiple regression analyses indicated that these assumptions were significantly predicted by the subjects' stereotype of gay men as effeminate, above and beyond the subjects' political conservatism and religious attendance. Results are discussed in accordance with G. M. Herek's (1984) functional approach to attitudes toward homosexuality. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2004 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)



McPherson, D. (1993). *Gay parenting couples: Parenting arrangements, arrangement satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pacific Graduate School of Psychology.

Twenty-eight gay male parenting couples and 27 heterosexual parenting couples from across the United States participated in a study comparing gay parenting couples and heterosexual parenting couples. Gay parenting couples are already existing gay couples into which a child has been brought prior to the child's 9-month birthday and in which the child is presently being reared. Parents' division of labor and satisfaction with their division of labor was assessed using Cowan and Cowan's *Who Does What?* Relationship satisfaction was assessed using a single question on relationship satisfaction and Spanier's 32-item Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). Results revealed gay parenting couples demonstrate signifi-

cantly more equitable arrangements of parenting tasks and roles and significantly greater satisfaction with those arrangements than the heterosexual parenting couples. A single question on relationship satisfaction revealed no significant difference between groups in reported satisfaction, while the 32-item DAS revealed the gay parenting couples to be significantly more satisfied with their relationships than the heterosexual couples, especially in the area of dyadic cohesion and affective expression. Post-hoc testing revealed a gender difference: Women reported significantly greater dissatisfaction with parenting arrangements than their husbands or gay parents. Findings are explained in terms of three factors unique to the experience and social setting of gay parenting couples. (*The dissertation citation and abstract contained here is published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.*)

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Miller, B. (1979). **Gay fathers and their children.** *Family Coordinator*, 28, 544-552.

Presents data from a 3-year study on the quality and nature of the relationships of homosexual fathers with their children. In-depth interviews were conducted with a snowball sample of 40 gay fathers and 14 of their children. Uses a cross-national sample: Interviews were conducted in large and small cities in both Canada and the United States. Excluded from the study were men who no longer saw their children. Fathers were aged from 24 to 64, and the children who were interviewed ranged from 14 to 33 years of age. Addresses the nature of the father-child relationship and the children's adjustment to their father's homosexuality. Four issues frequently raised in custody cases are discussed: Do gay fathers have children to cover their homosexuality, do they molest their children, do their children turn out to be gay in disproportionate numbers, and does having a gay father expose a child to homophobic harassment. Concludes that concerns that gay fathers will have a negative impact on their children's development are unfounded. (Copyright © 1995 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Miller, J. A., Jacobsen, R. B., & Bigner, J. J. (1981). **The child's home environment for lesbian versus heterosexual mothers: A neglected area of research.** *Journal of Homosexuality*, 7, 49-56.

Compared 34 lesbian (aged 21-42 yrs.) and 47 heterosexual (aged 24-63 yrs.) mothers in terms of the home setting provided and the caregiver role vis-à-vis children. Results reveal a less affluent socioeconomic setting for the children of lesbian mothers. A strong child-development orientation was found among lesbian mothers, undermining the stereotype of lesbians as aloof from children. Lesbian mothers tended to assume a principal role in child-care responsibility regardless of whether the caregiver and breadwinner roles were shared with a live-in partner. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Morris, J. F., Balsam, K. F., & Rothblum, E. D. (2002). **Lesbian and bisexual mothers and non-mothers: Demographics and the coming-out process.** *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16, 144-156.

In a large, national sample of 2,431 lesbians and bisexual women, those who had children before coming out, those who had children after coming out, and those who did not have children were compared on demographic factors and milestones in the coming-out process. Differences were found in race/ethnicity, age, prior marriage, income, religion, use of mental health counseling, and reported hate crimes. Results are also presented for lesbians and bisexual women of each ethnic/racial and age group. Controlling for age and income, lesbians and bisexual women who had children before coming out had reached developmental milestones in the coming-out process about 7-12 years later than women who had children after coming out and about 6-8 years later than nonmothers. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Mucklow, B. M., & Phelan, G. K. (1979). **Lesbian and traditional mothers' responses to adult responses to child behavior and self concept.** *Psychological Reports*, 44, 880-882.

Attempted to determine if significant differences existed between 34 lesbian and 47 traditional mothers on measures of maternal attitude and self-concept. The *Adult Response to Child Behavior*, a set of slides of children's behaviors and set responses, provided an indicator of adult, task-, and child-centered attitudes. Three personality aggregates—self-confidence, dominance, and nurturance—were computed from responses to the Adjective Check List. Chi-square analyses showed no difference in response to children's behavior or in self-concept of lesbian and traditional mothers. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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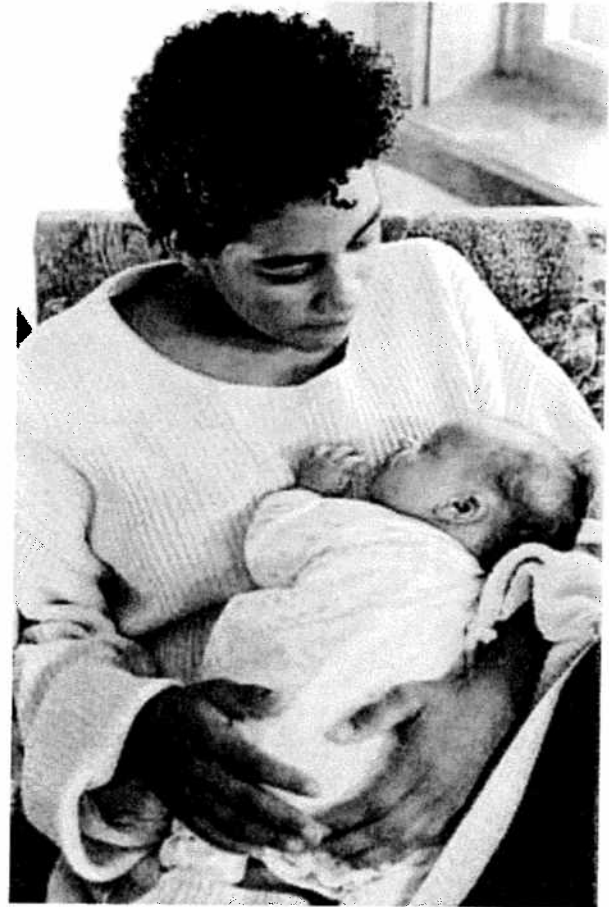
O'Connell, A. (1993). *Voices from the heart: The developmental impact of a mother's lesbianism on her adolescent children*. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 63, 281-299.

Studied 11 young adults (aged 16-23 yrs.) whose mothers, either prior to or postdivorce, "came out" as lesbian. The subjects' experiences surrounding their mothers' disclosure were explored, and sexual identity issues and friendships were highlighted. Findings indicate profound loyalty and protectiveness toward the mother, openness to diversity, and sensitivity to the effects of prejudice. Subjects reported strong needs for peer affiliation and perceived secrecy regarding their mother's lesbianism as necessary for relationship maintenance. Other concerns, abating over time, were unrealized fears of male devaluation and homosexuality. Pervasive sadness about the parental breakup remained, and wishes for family reunification were relinquished when mother "came out." (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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Osterweil, D. A. (1991). *Correlates of relationship satisfaction in lesbian couples who are parenting their first child together*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, California School of Professional Psychology, Berkeley/Alameda.

Thirty lesbian couples who were parenting an 18- to 36-month-old child conceived through alternative insemination participated in this cross-sectional study. Based on a multidimensional model of couple satisfaction for heterosexual couples in their transition to parenthood, developed by the Becoming a Family Project at University of California-Berkeley (Cowan, C. P., Cowan, P. A., Heming, Garrett, Coysh, Curtis-Boles, & Boles, 1985), intrapsychic variables (self-esteem, needs for autonomy, affiliation, and nurturance), dyadic variables (role arrangement, coming out, communication, sex, and commitment), and extradyadic variables (social/familial support, use of a known or unknown donor, adoption by the nonbiological



parent, and child-related issues) were analyzed for individual and couple data. Satisfaction was most significantly correlated with low need for autonomy, identification of sense of self as "partner," perception of parents' past relationship as positive, egalitarian distribution of and satisfaction with role arrangement, effective communication skills, expectation of being together in 20 years, equal commitment, satisfying sexual relationship, and use of an unknown donor. Findings are explained in terms of newer female developmental models which acknowledge and normalize women's relational values. The study also compared the biological and nonbiological mothers. Biological mothers had a greater need for autonomy, saw their actual and ideal role as mother slightly larger and their actual and ideal leisure time as smaller than did their partners, and had a more positive relationship with their own mothers. There were no differences between partners in their self-esteem, coming-out experiences, felt acceptance as a

lesbian parent, relationship commitment, sexual satisfaction, social involvement, or their perception of their child. They divided household chores, decision making, and child-related tasks about equally. Finally, the study described the women and the couples' parenting choices. Women's mean age was 35, and the average length of their relationships was 7.7 years. Seventy percent used an unknown donor to prevent potential third-party interference. Seventy percent of the nonbiological mothers were planning to or had already adopted their child. One third of the couples were planning to have another child. Limitations of the study and implications for clinical intervention and future research are offered. (*The dissertation citation and abstract contained here is published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.*)

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**Pagelow, M. D. (1980). Heterosexual and lesbian single mothers: A comparison of problems, coping and solutions. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 5, 198-204.**

Gathered descriptive data on the everyday experiences of 23 heterosexual (mean age 38 yrs.) and 20 lesbian (mean age 34 yrs.) single mothers; among them, heterosexuals had 51 children, and lesbians had 43. Children ranged in age from 1 to 30 years.

Research methods included participant observation in a wide range of discussion groups and group activities, in-depth interviews, and a questionnaire. Using a phenomenological perspective, comparisons were drawn between heterosexual and lesbian respondents' adaptations to three common concerns: child custody, housing, and employment. While both groups reported oppression in the areas of freedom of association, employment, housing, and child custody, the degree of perceived oppression was greater for lesbian mothers. Lesbian mothers exhibited patterns of behavior that may have been responses to perceived oppression and that counterbalanced felt difficulties by the development of relatively higher levels of independence. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Patterson, C. J. (1994a). Children of the lesbian baby boom: Behavioral adjustment, self-concepts, and sex-role identity. In B. Greene & G. Herek (Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives on lesbian and gay psychology: Theory, research and application* (pp. 156-175). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.**

(From the chapter) today, the rise in births among openly lesbian women in the United States has been so dramatic that many observers have labeled it a lesbian baby boom / the study described here was designed to enhance the understanding of child development in the families of the lesbian baby boom /first, demographic and other characteristics of the families who participated in this research were described / the behavioral adjustment, self-concepts, and sex role behavior of children in these families were explored / to allow comparisons between children with lesbian and heterosexual parents, a group of children in "new" lesbian mother families was studied, and the children's scores on standardized measures were compared with national or other available norms [37 families, headed either by a lesbian couple or by a lesbian single mother, with at least one child between the ages of 4 and 9 yrs. participated in the study]. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Patterson, C. J. (1995a). Families of the lesbian baby boom: Parents' division of labor and children's adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, 31, 115-123.**

Assessed lesbian couples' division of labor, their satisfaction with division of labor and with their relationships, and their children's psychosocial adjustment. The 26 participating families were headed by lesbian couples, each of whom had at least one child between 4 and 9 years of age. Parents' relationship satisfaction was generally high but was unrelated to measures of parental division of labor or of children's adjustment. Although both parents reported sharing household tasks and decision making equally, biological mothers reported greater involvement in child care, and non-biological mothers reported spending longer hours in

paid employment. Parents were more satisfied and children were more well adjusted when labor involved in child care was more evenly distributed between the parents. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Patterson, C. J. (2001). Families of the lesbian baby boom: Maternal mental health and child adjustment. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy*, 4, 91-107.**

This article reports a study of maternal mental health, household composition, and children's adjustment among 37 families in which 4- to 9-year-old children had been born to or adopted early in life by lesbian mothers. Results showed that maternal reports of both self-esteem and psychological symptoms were within the normal range. Consistent with findings for heterosexual parents and their children, assessments of children's adjustment were significantly associated with measures of maternal mental health. These results underline the importance of maternal mental health as a predictor of children's adjustment among lesbian as well as among heterosexual families. (Reprinted with permission of Haworth Press. Copyright © 2001. All rights reserved.)

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**Patterson, C. J., Hurt, S., & Mason, C. D. (1998). Families of the lesbian baby boom: Children's contact with grandparents and other adults. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 68, 390-399.**

Investigated, in an exploratory study of 37 lesbian-mother families, the frequency of 4- to 9-year-old children's contact with adults in their extended family and friendship networks. Results countered stereotypes of such children as isolated from parents' families of origin. Among children's adult contacts, those with relatives of their biological mothers were found to be more frequent than those with relatives of nonbiological mothers. Children were more likely to be in contact with their grandparents, as well as with other adult relatives, on the biological rather than the nonbiologi-

cal side. Interpretations of these findings are considered. (PsycINFO Database Record. Copyright © 2002 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.)

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**Paul, J. P. (1986). *Growing up with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual parent: An exploratory study of experiences and perceptions*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley CA.**

Thirty-four men and women (ages 18 to 28) with a homosexual or bisexual parent were interviewed extensively about their experiences growing up in their families, learning of their parents' sexuality, and developing their own social relationships. Their retrospective accounts (mean time lapse since learning of parent's sexuality was 9.12 yrs.) were analyzed to provide a picture of reactions to a parent's "coming out," reported consequences of having a homosexual or bisexual parent, and the perspectives held by offspring on family, friendships, and sexuality. Quantitative findings concerning the initial reactions of offspring support some of the previous qualitative reports in the field. Respondents who had learned about their parents' sexual orientation in adolescence reported significantly more negative initial reactions to the news than respondents who learned before this time. They were more likely to report negative initial reactions if the parent was their father as opposed to their mother. Initial reactions to the parent also were linked to respondents' concerns about negative reactions of friends to both the non-heterosexual parent and themselves. These initial reactions were not, however, necessarily indicative of perceived current closeness to the non-heterosexual parent, one sign of how the offspring had resolved their feelings about their parents' homosexuality or bisexuality. The current quality of respondents' relationships with their bisexual or homosexual parents was related to the perceptions of parents' ease of communication and openness with offspring. Respondents' conceptualizations of personal relationships suggest possible effects of the experience of growing up with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual